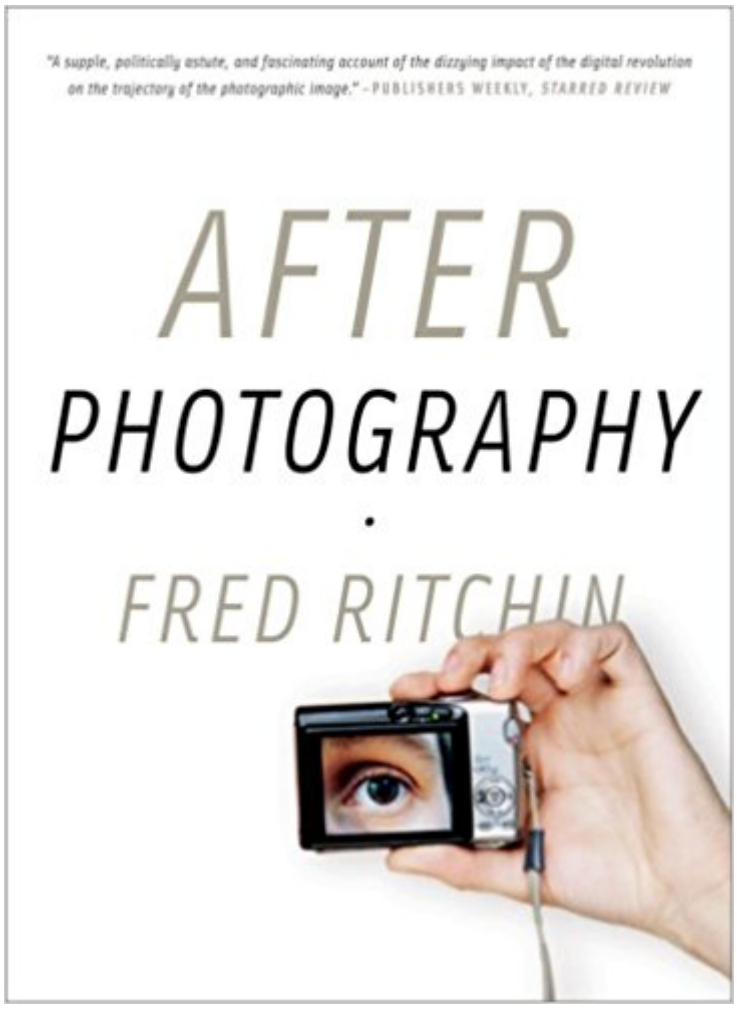
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After Photography



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Synopsis

In the tradition of John Berger and Susan Sontag, Fred Ritchin analyzes photographyÃ¢â ¬â„¢s failings and reveals untapped potentials for this evolving medium. One of our most influential commentators on photography investigates the future of visual media as the digital revolution transforms images, changing the way we conceptualize the world. From photos of news events taken on cell phones to the widespread use of image surveillance, digital media has fundamentally altered the way we receive visual information. Simultaneously, the increased manipulation of photographs has made photography suspect as reliable documentation, raising questions about its role in recounting personal and public histories. In a world beset by critical problems and ambiguous boundaries, Ritchin argues that it is time to begin energetically exploring possibilities created by technological innovations, and to use them to better understand our rapidly changing world. 50 illustrations

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Ritchen (In Our Own Image) offers a supple, politically astute and fascinating account of the dizzying impact of the digital revolution on the trajectory of the photographic image that, like all new media, changes the world in the very act of observing it. The myth of photographic objectivity has concealed fakery as old as the medium itself, he notes, but in the digital era, concealment and manipulation come to shape the very experience of the image as sui generis: The lens has dimmed and a distorting mirror has been added. All is not lost for photography as a

truth-telling medium, however: the author suggests methods for verifying the authenticity and provenance of images through footnoting and labeling. Moreover, Ritchen stresses how digital media, linked through the Web, offer an appropriative and hypertextual approach to photography that promises to reinvent the embattled authorial image into an evolving collaboration, conversation and investigation among an infinite number of ordinary people. Cautiously optimistic, the author poses provocative questions throughout, including whether digital technology and Web 2.0 together provide a means for regaining a sense of the actual from deep within a virtual world. (Dec.)
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Ã¢â ¬Å“Starred Review. A supple, politically astute and fascinating account of the dizzying impact of the digital revolution on the trajectory of the photographic image.Ã¢â ¬Â• - Publishers Weekly

Photographers certainly know how to simplify their subjects and how to put a frame around a portion of the world so that nothing impinges on their image. However, perhaps because they look at the world through a viewfinder, they sometimes seem to miss not only the larger world around them but the place of their photography in that larger world.Fred Ritchin, who teaches photography at N.Y.U., believes that the method of capturing images changes the world and that the world changes the method of capturing images. In a some times rambling essay, the author looks at various aspects of photography, with an emphasis on the changes wrought by the digital world. On the one hand he decries the easy malleability of the digital image, and on the other sees opportunity for greater understanding through the digital photograph. He explores possible uses of digital media in the future in ways that reminded me of the world of Neal Stephenson’s 1992 science fiction novel "Snow Crash (Bantam Spectra Book)". (The Wall Street Journal recommended reading "Snow Crash" for a view of the future; better hurry up before that book is overtaken by events.)Ritchin complains about the uses of digital media as a means of invading privacy and at the same time suggests that its use can aid humanitarian causes. Although he sees the possibility of either, or both, great benefits and great costs, he does not suggest what photographers can do to direct digital media toward the benefits. Furthermore, after exploring many bold possibilities, he seems to come down for the use of photography on the internet in sites that give the viewer options in how to examine the pictures presented by hidden captions or links of portions of pictures to other sites or similar techniques. It seems a simple direction for a book that aims at lofty goals for digital photography.Ritchin is primarily concerned about the world of documentary photography and

ignores the role of the digital in art photography, although I suppose that his interest in websites that present the viewer with options to follow could be bent to artful use as well as documentary.While a well turned phrase is always appreciated, often the author's prose turns purple, or takes a flight of fancy, as when he suggests engaging an image of his long-dead grandmother in conversation.The book is interesting and makes some valid points, but on the whole, it looks like the author had collected notes over the years and decided that no thought could remain unuttered. It will be hard for photographers, viewers and students of media to develop a useful picture of the role of photography in the future from this book.

After Photography comes from an expert in both photography and new media, and offers a fine mix of examination of how digital and photographic media has affected human consciousness, art, and ethics. The photo no longer 'captures a moment': it can be manipulated, repackaged, and shared online. The digital world thus has far-reaching ramifications over print photography and its impact, considered in AFTER PHOTOGRAPHY, makes for serious social concerns key to any high-school to college-level photography library.

Ritchin provides great examples of innovative uses of photography with new media today (web sites, artist's projects...) although he doesn't suggest much as to 'what's next.' He lays out important questions about authenticity with regard to digital photography and the 'truth' behind a photograph. He explains what he calls 'hyperphotography' as the new interactive web based format for photographs. I don't know if his idea about scrolling over a photo to 'see more' will catch on but he definitely got me thinking about the potential for new technologies in photography. This was an interesting read and I appreciate the reproduction of some great photographs.

My favorite Ritchin's book.

I am looking forward to getting my teeth into this book. This was suggested by a professor of mine. Study and ye shall learn.

I enjoy this book. I arrived on time.

This is a fascinating look at the future of still imaging. I hesitate to use the term photography because photography as we know it is moving toward the same state as oil painting or watercolors.

The creation of a still image using silver halides or bleached silver halides and dyes has moved from a mainstream activity to a niche activity performed by wild haired artists with berets and goatees. This book explores that and what it means to the idea that a photograph reflects reality (and delves into exactly what reality is, and how stills reflect differing views of reality).This book is a must read for people interested in the future of still imaging, and interested in shaping and participating in that future.

I got the book quickly - within a week - and it cost a fraction of what the school bookstore was charging. Not to mention the book came to me in better quality than stated. It’s practically new. I will never purchase books at the school bookstore again.

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